

## **Providing Opportunities for Highway Programs to Remediate Natural Resource Concerns in New York**

**Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District**, *Total Cost:* \$232,390, *FHWA Share:* \$112,490

*Period of Performance:* 36 months, *Dates:* March 4, 2008 – March 5, 2011

*AOTR:* Bethaney Bacher-Gresock, *Grant Project Website:*

[http://www.tiogacountyny.com/departments/administration/soil\\_water.php](http://www.tiogacountyny.com/departments/administration/soil_water.php)

### **Project Goals**

The goal of the Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District (TCSWCD) *Eco-Logical* project is to work with the New York FHWA Division Office and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) staff to develop REFs<sup>1</sup> to test study basins in the Tioga County region and identify areas for conservation or mitigation.

### **Project Activities and Key Accomplishments**

The project team has started collecting GIS data and selecting watersheds as target project areas. Staff also attended regional meetings at which they made key connections with MPOs and learned about the regulations that govern the transportation planning process and the role of MPOs in that process.

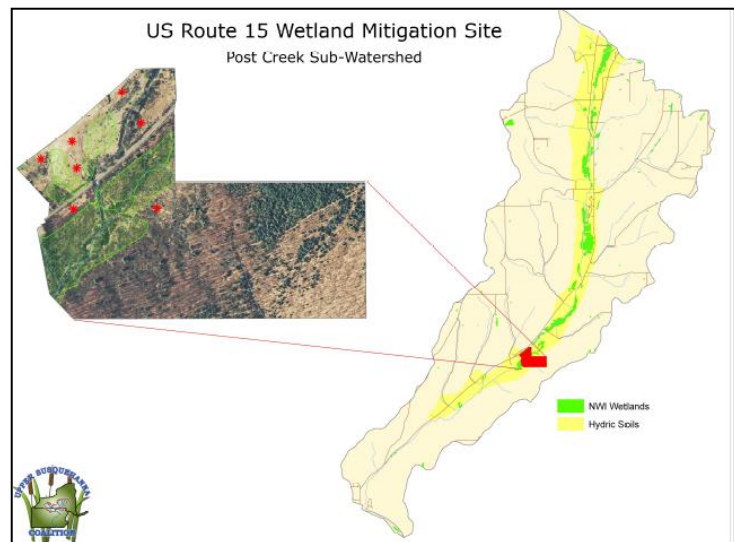
Based on its newfound understanding of the MPO planning process, the project team discussed the development of a compatible, proactive mitigation program with MPO representatives. These regional meetings also afforded MPOs the opportunity to learn about environmental resources that TCSWCD could offer.

### **Challenges**

The project team experienced challenges in agreeing upon project deliverables and goals with NYSDOT, which is the project's match organization. The project team found strategic differences between NYSDOT's approach to mitigation and TCSWCD's own approach. However, TCSWCD is committed to working with NYSDOT to resolve these differences and believes the project work has informed both agencies about each others' resources and capabilities. TCSWCD staff will work with FHWA and NYSDOT to reassess the project deliverables to meet the needs of all three agencies. While TCSWCD expressed some mixed feelings over its initial *Eco-Logical* grant program experiences, the organization believes the data generated and the relationships forged through the process will be beneficial to the county and to mitigation in the region.

### **Future Steps**

TCSWCD plans to refocus its project to incorporate close work with MPOs into the grant project scope. TCSWCD also would like to assist the MPOs with environmental mitigation as each MPO goes through its transportation planning processes. TCSWCD envisions integrating its own resources and knowledge of environmental planning into the MPO planning process.



**Figure 6: The US Route 15 wetland mitigation site.**

---

<sup>1</sup> *Eco-Logical* recommends that a REF consist of an overlay of maps showing agencies' individual plans, accompanied by descriptions of conservation goals in the defined region(s).